

ARKANSAS Governor Mike Beebe



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GOVERNOR BEEBE'S WEEKLY COLUMN AND RADIO ADDRESS: REWARDING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

LITTLE ROCK - Governor Beebe's weekly radio address can be found online in MP3 format and downloadable for radio use at [this page](#).

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As part of our ongoing quest to improve educational outcomes, the State of Arkansas now provides financial awards to public schools for academic achievement, academic growth and high graduation rates. This motivational approach is called the Arkansas School Recognition and Reward Program. It allows the top 20 percent of our schools to receive financial incentives to be used for improving and maintaining intellectual performance. This unique program signifies the first time that state funding has been attached to student performance.

During the current 2013-14 school year, 206 of our public schools are being recognized as high-performing schools, and collectively, they'll receive \$7 million. We used surplus money from the General Improvement Fund for this first year. During the recent fiscal session, the Legislature agreed with my budget proposal to fund another \$7 million, this time in ongoing general revenue, for the next school year.

Schools that receive this money must establish a committee to determine the best use of the funds. That committee includes the principal, a teacher elected by the faculty, and a parent selected by the local Parent Teacher Association or other parent-involvement group. Schools can use the monies for new education equipment and materials, faculty and staff bonuses, for enhancing programs with temporary personnel, and other specified options.

Today's students are tomorrow's workforce and leaders. By rewarding schools that best prepare their students for the competitive 21st century, we're bettering an education system that can improve our State's standard of living. When a family is able to send its first member to college, we see dramatic improvements to that family's economic status over generations. This opportunity awaits many families and individuals in our State, but we need schools and teachers that will challenge them to succeed. By recognizing those who provide exceptional standards of intellectual achievement, we can boost our low college-completion rates and our future economic-development prospects.

The School Recognition and Reward Program offers opportunities beyond strong individual results. We can take what is working well in these high-achieving schools and share those lessons with school districts throughout Arkansas. We want all our schools to strive for inclusion in that top 20 percent. Schools that are conscientiously moving to meet the program's criteria will bring us to our goal of all children learning, all belonging, all succeeding.

I am proud of the Arkansas schools that have achieved this level of learning and been rewarded this year for those efforts. I commend them for continuing the push for world-class education.

Just as parents have certain expectations of their children's success in school, all Arkansans should have the highest expectations of our educational system for exceptional performance and a shrinking achievement gap. This program is another important tool. But in the end, we still need parents, teachers and administrators to remain dedicated to the students who will lead our State's achievements in the decades to come.

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